

# Anxious About School

Guidance 2023

“  
Working together  
to provide support  
for every anxious child  
earlier.”



**Anxious  
About School**  
Support



**Durham  
CYP MH Partnership**



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# Introduction



## Why has this document been created?

This guidance document has been created through County Durham’s **Children and Young People’s Mental Health Partnership** which includes members of: The SEND and Inclusion Service, Attendance Team, Investing in Children, One Point Services, Health and Durham’s children and young people (CYP). The partnership ensures that wherever possible there is a coordinated approach to meeting the mental health needs of children and young people in Durham.

This document is intended to support school staff in identifying and effectively responding to the needs of children and young people who are anxious about school. This group of young people are at increased risk of disengagement, poor attendance, isolation, low mood, anxiety disorders and depression. Therefore, identifying and understanding the risk factors and underlying needs of these young people at the earliest opportunity is a priority for all of us in Durham.

## Aims

The aim of this guidance document is to support Durham school professionals to develop their understanding of, and ability to, support CYP who are anxious about school.

This document is aimed to support schools with a graduated approach and is designed to be used alongside existing good practice.

The professional context for how we practice is grounded in the principles of:

**Early and effective intervention**

**Working in partnership across services**

**Formulating and intervening according to individual needs**



## Introduction

## Definitions

The terminology around children who are anxious about school is continually changing and being updated to reflect the emerging literature and research findings. Some previous terms have included: school phobia, school refusal, and truancy (Kearney, 2008, Pellegrini, 2007). More recently there has been a shift towards using the term 'emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA)' (West Sussex Educational Psychology Service, 2018) and 'emotionally based school non-attendance (EBSNA)' (Solihull Community Educational Psychology Service, 2020) which have been used interchangeably. A new term 'school distress' has also emerged.

**Truancy:** 'generally refers to unexcused, illegal, surreptitious absences, non-anxiety-based absenteeism linked to lack of parental knowledge about the behaviour, absenteeism linked to delinquency or academic problems, or absenteeism linked to social conditions such as homelessness or poverty"  
(Kearney, 2008, p.452)

**School Distress:** the experience 'of CYP who face difficulty attending school'  
(Connolly, Patterson, Hockey & Mullally, 2022)

**School Phobia:** 'generally refers to fear-based absenteeism, but youths are rarely phobic of school and so this term has been deemphasized in recent research literature.'  
(Hanna, Fischer, & Fluent, 2006; Suveg, Aschenbrand, & Kendall, 2005)'  
(Kearney, 2008, p.453)

**Emotionally based school avoidance:** 'a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have severe difficulty in attending school due to emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school'  
(West Sussex Guidance, 2018, p.3)

**School refusal:** 'generally refers to anxiety-based absenteeism, often from separation, generalized or social anxiety'  
(Kearney, 2008)

## Introduction

In Durham we consulted with CYP and their families around terminology and they told us their preferred term was 'Anxious About School'. Therefore, we will refer to children who are anxious about school throughout this guidance and it is defined as:

### **Anxious About School:**

*An umbrella term used to describe any child or young person who is struggling to engage in their education due to emotional stress and distress.*



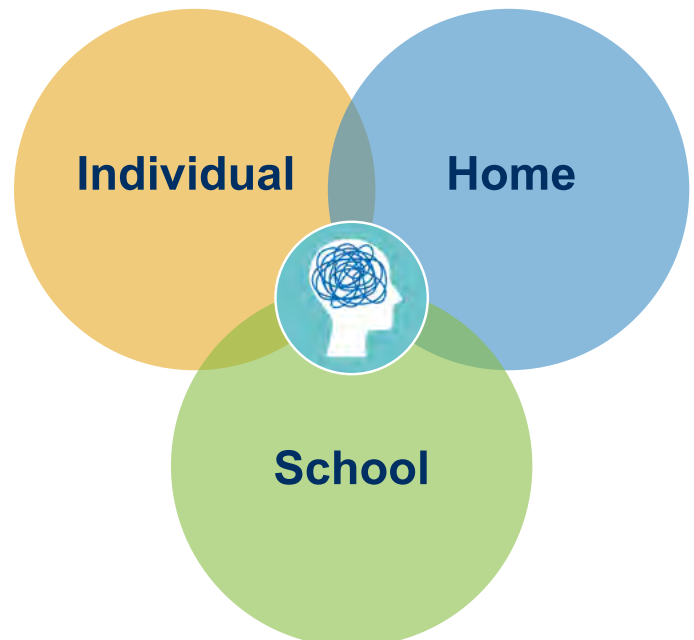
# Anxious About School

The term **Anxious About School** is used in this guidance document and throughout Durham rather than a term using 'refusal' or 'avoidance' because this is what CYP in Durham told us they prefer. CYP often want to go to school and aren't refusing but they feel so anxious that they can't attend. These children do not have control over these feelings of anxiety and in order to reduce the feelings of anxiety they are experiencing they avoid the situation that produces the anxiety – school. Some children are able to attend school but struggle to attend lessons and therefore are not fully engaged in school life.

## Factors influencing Anxiety About School

Whilst the development of anxiety about school is specific to the individual child or young person, research indicates that there are common risk factors which contribute to the emergence and maintenance of anxiety about school. We can best categorise these factors as either individual, school and family based. Anxiety about school is now accepted as multifactorial, meaning that rather than one single factor contributing to it, it is rather the complex interplay of several factors (*Devenney & O'Toole, 2021*). To support children and young people experiencing anxiety about school, careful assessment of the factors influencing it should be carried out (*King & Bernstein, 2001*).

Through exploration of real-life case studies, several factors that influence school anxiety were identified which can be categorised into the following systems individual, family, and school:



## Anxious About School

Within each of the systems (individual, family and school) there are also risk and protective factors that will contribute to a CYP's anxiety about school. Risk factors refer to the things in a CYP's life that place them at greater risk of being anxious about school. Protective factors on the other hand are the things in their life that may act as a barrier towards being anxious about school. Some examples of possible risk factors for the individual, home and school systems are displayed in the table below:

System	Individual	Family	School
Possible Risk Factors	Diagnosis of Autism and associated needs	Parental mental health	Multiple school moves / within key stage moves
	Difficulty forming trusting relationships with key adults	Siblings with poor attendance	Secondary transition
	History of poor attendance	Issues within family relationships	Increased expectations related to secondary school systems
	Difficulty talking about emotions	Pressure and restrictions on family systems	Difficulties occurring on transport to school such as the school bus
	Academically capable / high achievers	Other caring responsibilities of parents	Changes within the school environment
	Body image issues or eating disorders	Parents' own views of and experiences of education	Breaks in schooling (including COVID-19 school closures)
	Generalised or specific anxieties		Sensory environment of school
	Friendship Difficulties		Specific lessons (e.g. P. E.)
Underlying health issues			

## Anxious About School

Some examples of the possible protective factors for the individual, home and school systems are displayed in the table below:

System	Individual	Family	School
Possible Protective Factors	CYP's strengths	Positive relationships in their family and/or community	Positive relationships with staff
	CYP's areas of interest	Willingness to work with school and other support agencies	Willingness to work with family and other support agencies
	CYP's aspirations and ambitions for the future	Positive parenting styles	Positive peer relationships
	CYP's motivation for change	Developing an understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings	Experiencing success in school no matter how small
	Increasing self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy		Having a flexible approach to the school day and the curriculum
			Developing an understanding of the CYP's needs and feelings





## Anxious About School

### Four Main Functions of School Anxiety

It is also important to consider the function of school anxiety for each individual child. Kearney (2008) suggested there are 4 main functions of school anxiety. The first two points negatively reinforce the school anxiety, whereas in the second two points, the school anxiety is being positively reinforced by factors outside of school (Kearney & Spear, 2012).

**To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school such as low mood or anxiety**

**To avoid uncomfortable situations that might be stressful such as academic or social demands**

**To reduce separation anxiety or to seek attention from family members**

**To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school such as going shopping or gaming**

# Local and National Contexts

## National

A recent **Attendance Audit** published in March 2022 by the Children's Commissioner "*Where are England's Children?*" concluded that there are currently tens of thousands of children in England who are persistently or severely absent from education or missing from education altogether.

1-2% is generally the documented prevalence of anxiety about school in the UK, but difficulties in gaining accurate school attendance data and the nature of the data gathered, mean that this figure is unlikely to accurately reflect the number of children and young people who are affected by anxiety about school. Additionally, school attendance data does not account for those children and young people who experience difficulties getting to school in the morning or staying in the classroom throughout the day. The prevalence of children and young people experiencing absence from school due to anxiety may therefore be as high as 5%, with a general increase in the prevalence of anxiety about school in the England

Children and young people who experienced attendance difficulties due to anxiety prior to school closures due to COVID-19, might now be at a greater risk following the reopening of schools.

It is therefore likely that there has been an increase in the number of students who are experiencing anxiety about school because of the impact of COVID-19.

The Children's Commissioner surveyed children who are educated at home or not in school at all in England (The Big Ask). They heard from nearly 5,000 children who said they were home educated and nearly 2,000 children who were not in school at all. Of course, some families choose to home educate for philosophical reasons and have the resources and ability to do so. But many children spoke of the challenges they had faced in school, such as bullying, struggling with anxiety and other mental health needs, or having special educational needs which weren't being identified or supported. These children were out of school, not because of choice, but because they hadn't received the support they need.

## Durham

Survey information gathered from a selected group of schools in Durham suggests that around 3-4% of CYP experience anxiety about school that meets the definition on page 5. About half of these young people had a diagnosis of Autism or social communication needs and around half were experiencing difficulties that had continued over time.

Case studies of individual students experiencing anxiety about school gathered across services and families in Durham show a pattern of increasing non-attendance over time, leading to long periods of time missed from education. More rarely, pupils experienced a significant one-off event which led to their non-attendance. Students were often absent from school entirely, or for part of the week, which correlated to specific lessons or situations. Children or young people experiencing anxiety about school

## Local and national contexts

often also struggled more widely, for example, finding it difficult to be outside of the home, and there was a pattern of missed appointments with support services.

Referral rates across a range of services and pathways in Durham suggest an increasing level of need in this area, with children and young people with Autism and social communication needs being over-represented in these referrals.

Numbers of children Electively Home Educated in Durham have shown an increase in numbers across all age groups and an increase in those students with EHC plans.

Referrals to the Education Health Needs team have shown a significant increase in number and rate of referrals including increasing proportions of pupils at primary age, with diagnoses or suspected Autism, and with EHCPs or SEN support plans.

In requests considered for EHC assessment across five weekly SEN panels, anxiety was a factor in 32% of requests, and of these, all of the CYP had diagnoses of Autism or were on the pathway for possible diagnosis. All cases where anxiety about school was mentioned also referenced Autism.

Recent referrals to the SENDIASS Service showed that 91% of referrals related to young people with a diagnosis of Autism or social communication needs. 74% of the CYP had associated social, emotional, and mental health needs including anxiety about school.

Schools surveyed in Durham identified some early warning signs for young people becoming anxious about school:

- Periods of unexplained absence or intermittent absences
- CYP complaining of feeling unwell during the school day
- Becoming withdrawn and spending increasingly more time on their own
- Struggling to concentrate in the classroom
- Struggling to separate from caregiver
- Mondays becoming a difficult day

# Understanding how anxiety links to non-attendance



## Anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease; usually when you don't know what is going to happen. Everyone experiences it and it is a very normal part of everyday life. Anxiety serves an important function; it helps to keep us safe. It activates in us a biological fight, flight, freeze, response which is designed to protect us and ensure our safety and wellbeing. Usually, we only get anxious when something big happens and for most people it usually only lasts a short time. However, for some people anxiety can remain prominent in their lives for longer than is helpful and it can interfere with their everyday life.





# Neurodiversity and Anxiety

The term **Neurodiversity** is used to describe the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one “right” way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits. The word neurodiversity refers to the diversity of all people, but it is often used in the context of autism as well as other neurological or developmental conditions such as **Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder** (ADHD), sensory processing disorder or learning disabilities. There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that children and young people (CYP) who are neurodivergent are more likely to experience anxiety about school. Connolly et al. found that 92% of children who are experiencing school distress have an underlying additional need linked to neurodiversity, and by far the largest group represented (at just over 83% with current school distress) were those CYP who present with social communication differences, including autism.

## What causes our Autistic Children and Young People to feel anxious?

The most common causes of anxiety in autistic CYP relate to school and social situations. What makes these situations anxiety provoking is usually understood through consideration of a range of differences which impact on how autistic CYP perceive the world and how they cope day to day. The **Autism Education Trust** describes 3 key areas of difference which can impact on how well a CYP copes day to day and can account for some of their anxiety. These are:

- Communicating and Interacting
- Processing Information
- Sensory Processing

## What are the key difficulties relating to school that cause anxiety?

Typical pressure points in the school day which create anxious feelings seem to link closely to an autistic young person’s ability to manage the following events and contexts which are likely to occur during the school day:

- changes: staffing, activities, places
- transitions: in and out of school, around school and between tasks
- managing a range of social situations which may have differing expectations
- the physical environment
- communicating, interacting, and getting along with a range of people for a wide range of purposes
- tackling and completing academic learning tasks
- activities which require increasing levels of independence, especially as CYP get older

*Please see Appendix 3 for a sources of anxiety checklist to complete.*



# Working with young people and families

All schools should aim to have practices in place that promote and facilitate positive, collaborative relationships with children and their families. During the assess and planning phases of an 'assess, plan, do, review' cycle it is important to develop a sense of trust with parents / carers so they do not feel accused or judged in any way. The information that parents / carers can provide is valuable, but the quality and quantity of it relies heavily on the relationship you are able to develop with them.

It is also important to gather the views of the child or young person (CYP). Think about who is the best person to do this? Who has a good relationship with them and will make them feel most comfortable?

Remember a CYP who is anxious about attending school is unlikely to be able to freely talk to an adult about the anxiety or difficulties they are experiencing. It is important to acknowledge that you understand this may be uncomfortable for them and you are there to try and help make it feel more comfortable.

**Children and families** working with **Investing in Children** have provided some top tips:

*Treat each day as a new day.*

*Offer different methods of communicating with young people.*

*Provide a safe, calm environment for open dialogue.*

*Provide an easy and subtle way for students to opt out of group discussions.*

*Be accommodating of sensory needs.*

*Provide positive role models to support young people to have a voice.*

*Encourage interaction with peers.*

*Agree mechanisms for communicating change.*

*Set realistic timescales for providing feedback.*

Further information about how to establish good practices for working collaboratively with CYP and their families can be sought from Investing in Children.

# Good Practice Guide

The **THRIVE model** can support you in developing a graduated response for CYP who may be anxious about school. The THRIVE model helps us think about the different levels of support for a CYP.



## Thrive graduated support

Level of Need: <b>Getting Advice – Universal Support</b>	
Indicators	Support Available
<p><b>Early Concerns</b></p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>Isolated days of non-attendance but generally still attending school.</p> <p>Out of class sometimes.</p> <p>Unsettled or unusual behaviour for that individual.</p>	<p>Early advice through consultation from Educational Psychology Service, Emotional Wellbeing &amp; Effective Learning Team, Social Communication &amp; Interaction Team regarding specific cases or incidents.</p> <hr/> <p>Transition planning groups.</p> <hr/> <p>Link Early Help Advisors – request for early help.</p> <hr/> <p>One Point.</p> <hr/> <p>Early Help conversation Forums.</p> <hr/> <p>Team Around the School for secondary schools.</p> <hr/> <p>Team Around the Family with support from Early Help Advisor if needed.</p> <hr/> <p>CPD training offer – free to all schools. Sessions include: Identifying and meeting the needs of CYP who anxious, Social Anxiety, Performance Anxiety, Separation Anxiety &amp; Safety Fears.</p> <hr/> <p>Emotional Health and Resilience Service who offer: advice and support to schools and parents as well as group sessions in schools or 1:1 intervention with CYP.</p> <hr/> <p>SENCO forums.</p> <hr/> <p>Emotional Wellbeing / Mental Health Locality Forums.</p>

## Good practice guide

Level of Need: <b>Getting Help – Targeted Support</b>	
Indicators	Support Available
<p><b>Growing Concerns</b></p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>Beginning to notice growing patterns of non-attendance at school.</p> <p>Parents making contact with school.</p> <p>Transition into school could be affected.</p>	<p>All the support at previous level, plus:</p> <hr/> <p>Attendance management support.</p> <hr/> <p>Fear-Less family support programme.</p> <hr/> <p>Targeted assessment, consultation and/or intervention from Educational Psychology Service, Emotional Wellbeing &amp; Effective Learning Team, Social Communication &amp; Interaction Team.</p> <hr/> <p>Support to develop in-school provision and intervention programmes (e.g. Connecting with Children, Nurture Groups, Zone of Regulation, Build to Express, ELSA) – See CPD directory for further details.</p>
Level of Need: <b>Getting More Help – Specialist Support</b>	
Indicators	Support Available
<p><b>Escalating Concerns</b></p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>Prolonged non-attendance due to the anxiety.</p> <p>Internal isolation affecting engagement in school and interaction.</p>	<p>All the support at previous level, plus:</p> <hr/> <p>Extensive support and intervention from Educational Psychology Service, Emotional Wellbeing &amp; Effective Learning Team, Social Communication &amp; Interaction Team.</p> <hr/> <p>Referral to Education Health Needs Team (if able to demonstrate a cycle of assess, plan, do, review using available support from the previous 2 levels).</p> <hr/> <p>CAMHS Single Point of Access.</p> <p>Discuss with GP.</p>
Level of Need: <b>Getting Risk Support – Crisis Support</b>	
Indicators	Support Available
<p><b>Significant Concerns</b></p> <p>E.g.</p> <p>Significant effect on mental health and well-being which may contribute towards self-harm or attempts to take own life.</p> <p>Not engaging with anything outside of house or bedroom.</p>	<p>All the support at previous level, plus:</p> <hr/> <p>Crisis CAMHS.</p>





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## Good practice guide

The following support does not specifically relate to anxiety about school but are all very helpful programmes for schools to access regarding mental health, wellbeing and resilience:

**Durham Resilience Programme (DRP)** and the **Health and Wellbeing Framework (HWF)**, both support schools and colleges to evaluate and develop their whole setting approach to wellbeing and resilience. Contact: [Ben.Greenfield@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Ben.Greenfield@durham.gov.uk)

**YAM – Youth Aware of Mental Health** is a universal programme offered to Year 9 students to promote increased awareness of mental health. Contact: [Lindsay.Burkinshaw@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Lindsay.Burkinshaw@durham.gov.uk)

The **NOW programme (Nurturing our Wellbeing)** is a resource developed to support the mental health and wellbeing of Year 5s. Contact: [Joanne.workman@durham.gov.uk](mailto:Joanne.workman@durham.gov.uk)

# Assess, Plan, Do, Review

For any CYP who is anxious about school, it is important to begin a cycle of assess, plan, do, review as your first step towards supporting them. See *Appendices 1-9*.

## ASSESS

- ✓ Assess your whole school needs using the Whole School Audit Tool (*Appendix 1*).
- ✓ Understand the strengths, interests and needs of each anxious pupil by:
  - Observing the pupil within different contexts (not just while you teach)
  - Enabling the CYP to contribute their own thoughts and views
  - Collaborating with parents / carers (*Appendices 4a & 4b*)
  - Identifying the barriers to learning in terms of social understanding and communication; flexibility, information processing and understanding; and sensory processing.
  - Seeking other professional input when necessary
  - Completing the sources of anxiety checklist (*Appendix 3*).
- ✓ Based on the assessment information, what are the reasons and functions of the young person's behaviour (*Appendices 5 & 6*).

## PLAN

- ✓ Consider what areas of CPD your school needs to engage in based on the assessment information from Audit Tool (*Appendix 2*).
- ✓ What reasonable adjustments can easily be put in place?
- ✓ What strengths of the young person can you draw upon?
- ✓ Write a Short Note, Support Plan or update the current ones (in partnership with parents / carers and the young person where appropriate).
- ✓ Communicate changes with key members of staff and professionals.
- ✓ Consider how you are going to offer support to the family? (*Appendices 7 & 8*)



## Assess, Plan, Do, Review

### Do

- ✓ Attend training and other CPD opportunities
- ✓ Adapt the curriculum, teaching, and learning to promote wellbeing and success.
- ✓ Be flexible with the curriculum.
- ✓ Have a positive attitude towards these young people.
- ✓ Adapt your interactions and communication style to take into account of what you have learnt about this young person.
- ✓ Adapt the school environment to take account of potential physical barriers, communication and sensory processing difficulties as well as social demands.
- ✓ Ensure there is a safe space the young person can access if they need a break.
- ✓ Use objects, pictures, and visual timetables to support understanding and learning.
- ✓ Be flexible in adapting assessments, behaviour policy, homework, lesson planning, and teaching to account for different ways of thinking and interacting with the world.

### REVIEW

- ✓ Reflect on and review the impact of approaches and strategies and make changes if needed (at least every half term). (*Appendix 9*)
- ✓ Reflect on these changes in partnership with the young person, other staff as well as with parents and other professionals if needed.
- ✓ Review the support plan and/or short note with CYP, family and professionals and make amendments or change outcomes based on the changing current situation.

## Support Process

for children and young people (CYP)  
who are anxious about school

### A Process Guide for Schools

**1**

**Notice CYP is showing early signs of anxiety**

**2**

**INITIATE EARLY**  
Conversations with family & relevant professionals

**3**

**Begin an ASSESS, PLAN, DO, REVIEW cycle with parents / carers and CYP**

**4**

**ASSESS & FORMULATE**  
*See Appendices 1, 3, 4a, 4b, 5 & 6*

**5**

**PLAN**  
*See Appendices 2, 7 & 8*

**6**

**DO**  
*See page 19 and Toolkit in Guidance document*

**7**

**REVIEW**  
*See Appendix 9*



# Top Tips from County Durham's CYP

## Do:

- ✓ Consider all the reasonable adjustments your school can make.
- ✓ Tailor your support to the individual and provide it before visible signs of distress.
- ✓ Recognise things change on a daily basis.
- ✓ Take a whole school approach, with supportive welcoming staff who understand the needs of individual young people and their families.
- ✓ Listen to the young person every day.
- ✓ Keep **positive** communication between school and family e.g. Home to school golden book.
- ✓ Think carefully about the advice you choose to give families.
- ✓ Give plenty of preparation time to transitions between schools.
- ✓ Include children in as many conversations as possible.
- ✓ Introduce bespoke timetables e.g. page a day with pictures of subject, times, photos of teacher.
- ✓ Prioritise mental health over attendance; learning won't happen if the young person isn't calm and comfortable in school.
- ✓ Provide sensory and emotional regulation breaks.
- ✓ Provide a designated quiet space / time out pass.
- ✓ Provide access to sensory toys / weighted blanket etc.
- ✓ Offer pet therapy (where possible).
- ✓ Provide positive role models with similar experience or peer mentors.
- ✓ Provide group support.
- ✓ Offer opportunities to work in reduced group sizes throughout day.
- ✓ Provide opportunities to write down feelings.



**Anxious  
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# Toolkit

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Toolkit

# Useful Resources

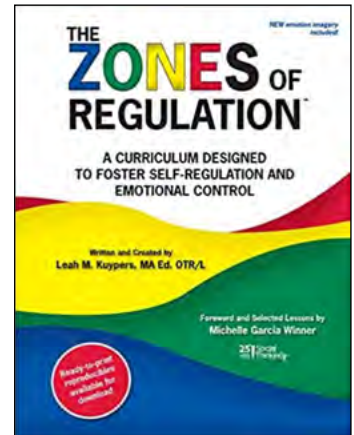
## The Zones of Regulation

**Leah M. Kuyper (2011), Think Social Publishing Inc, USA.**

*The Zones of Regulation* uses a cognitive behaviour approach to help children and young people develop awareness of feelings, energy and alertness levels while exploring a variety of tools and strategies for regulation. The language and visual structure of *The Zones of Regulation* helps make the complex skill of regulation more concrete for learners and those who support them.

### THE ZONES OF REGULATION: A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING PATHWAY TO REGULATION – Welcome

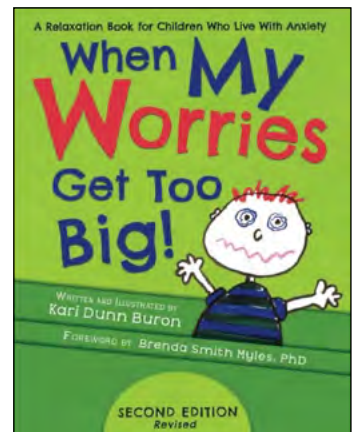
Free webinars and downloadable resources are available on the website.



## When My Worries Get Too Big

**Kari Dunn Buron (2022), AAPC Publishing, Kansas, USA.**

This illustrated children's book is written for children who become overwhelmed with worry and anxiety. It offers opportunities for children to develop their own self-soothing strategies.

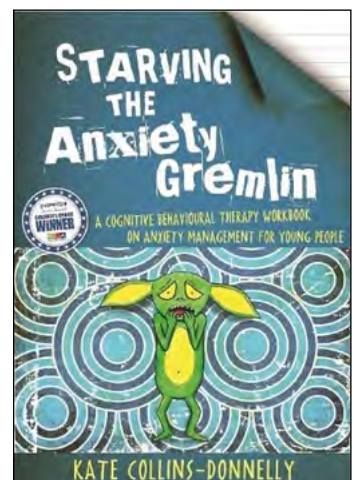


## Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for Young People

**Kate Collins-Donnelly (2013), Jessica Kingsley, London, UK.**

*Starving the Anxiety Gremlin* is a unique resource to help young people understand different types of anxiety and how to manage them.

The techniques described help young people to understand why they get anxious and how they can 'starve' their anxiety gremlin in order to manage their anxiety. This engaging workbook uses fun activities and real-life stories and can be used by young people aged 10+ on their own or with a parent or practitioner.





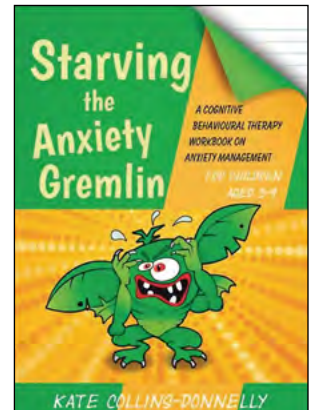


## Toolkit

### Starving the Anxiety Gremlin: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook on Anxiety Management for children aged 5-9

**Kate Collins-Donnelly (2013), Jessica Kingsley, London, UK.**

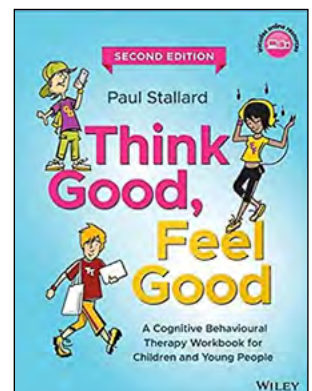
The Anxiety Gremlin is a mischievous creature who loves to gobble up your anxious feelings! The more anxiety you feed him, the bigger and bigger he gets and the more and more anxious you feel! How can you stop this? Starve your Anxiety Gremlin of anxious thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and watch him shrink! Based on cognitive behavioural principles, this workbook uses fun and imaginative activities to teach children how to manage their anxiety by changing how they think and act – getting rid of their Anxiety Gremlins for good!



### Think Good – Feel Good: A Cognitive Behaviour Therapy Workbook for Children and Young People

**Paul Stallard (2002), Wiley-Blackwell, UK.**

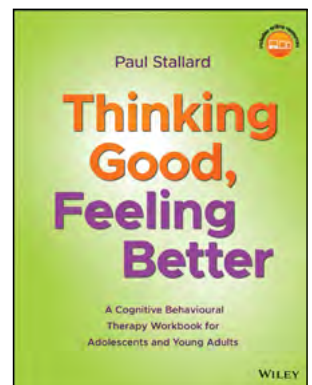
*Think Good – Feel Good* offers a range of flexible materials that can be used to structure and facilitate work with young people. In addition to covering the core elements used in CBT programmes, it also includes mindfulness techniques to support wellbeing. It also includes a practical series of exercises and worksheets that introduce specific concepts and techniques that school based staff can dip into to support work with anxious young people.



### Thinking Good, Feeling Better: A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Workbook for Adolescents and Young Adults

**Paul Stallard (2018) Wiley**

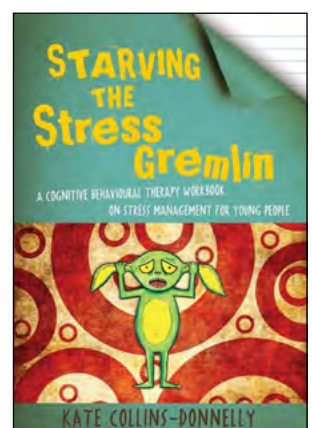
*Thinking Good, Feeling Better* includes traditional CBT ideas and also draws on ideas from mindfulness, compassion focused therapy and acceptance and commitment therapy. It includes practical exercises and worksheets that can be used to introduce and develop the key concepts of CBT and has been specifically designed for adolescents and young adults.



### Starving the Stress Gremlin

**Kate Collins – Donnelly (2013), Jessica Kingsley, London, UK.**

Watch out for the Stress Gremlin – he loves to feed on your stress, and as he gets bigger and bolder, you get more and more stressed! How can he be stopped? Don't give him any more stress to eat, and watch him and your stress disappear! *Starving the Stress Gremlin* shows young people how they can manage their stress levels through a range of effective techniques based on cognitive behavioural principles. For ages 10+

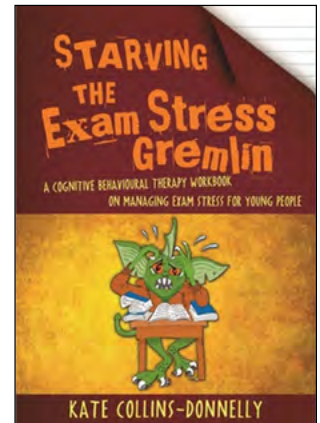


## Toolkit

### Starving the Exam Stress Gremlin

**Kate Collins-Donnelly (2017), Jessica Kingsley, London, UK.**

Stressed out by exams? Then the exam stress gremlin is in town! Exam fears and worries are his favourite foods, and the more of these you feed him, the bigger he gets and the more stressed you become. But he can be stopped! Starve him of stress-related thoughts, feelings and behaviours and feel him and your stress fade away! Can be completed independently by young people aged 10+

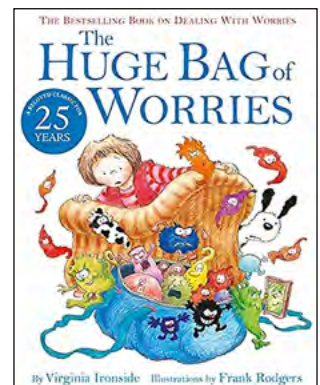


### The Huge Bag of Worries

**Virginia Ironside (2011)**

Wherever Jenny goes, her worries follow her – in a big blue bag. They are with her all the time – at school, at home, when she is watching TV and even in the bathroom! Jenny decides they have to go, but who will help her get rid of them?

A funny and reassuring look at dealing with worries and anxiety, to be used as a springboard into important conversations with children.



### The Invisible String

**Patrice Karst (2018)**

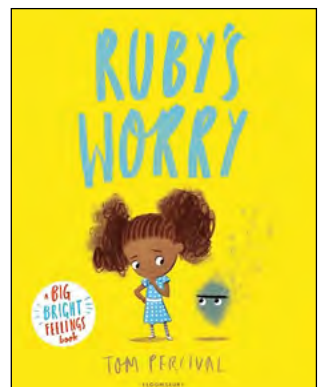
*The Invisible String* offers a very simple approach to overcoming loneliness, separation, or loss with an imaginative twist that children easily understand and embrace, and delivers a particularly compelling message in today's uncertain times.



### Ruby's Worry

**Tom Percival (2018)**

A helpful book to discuss childhood worries and anxieties, no matter how big or small they may be.





## Toolkit

### A range of useful online emotional literacy resources:

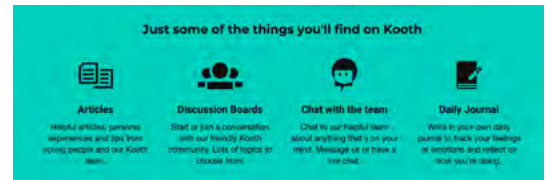
[www.elsa-support.co.uk](http://www.elsa-support.co.uk)

[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/mental-health-conditions/anxiety/>

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

An online mental wellbeing community for young people



[www.annafreud.org](http://www.annafreud.org)

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/resources/>

Relax like a cat (NHS) – Relaxation Activities for children

<https://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/26930/Relaxleaflet.pdf>

#### Charlie Waller: Managing Stress and Anxiety

This handout offers advice and tips on how to manage your time and stress levels ahead of exams or assessments, along with strategies to help you keep yourself well.

<https://charliewaller.org/resources/managing-stress-and-anxiety/>

Anna Freud Wellbeing toolkit, exploring the importance of relationships in schools

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/17009/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit.pdf>

#### A note on Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching is a relational approach to communication that supports children and adults to manage their emotions and behaviour and develop emotional regulation. Through our relationships with others, we learn to understand our experiences and therefore regulate our emotions.

Emotion coaching helps children to understand different emotions they experience, why they occur and how to handle them. Emotion Coaching UK has incorporated the elements of emotion coaching parenting into 4 easy to remember steps; recognising the children's feelings and empathising with them, validating the feelings and labelling them, setting limits of behaviour (if needed), and problem solving with the child (*see Appendix 10*).

Free online resources can be found at: [www.emotioncoachinguk.com](http://www.emotioncoachinguk.com)

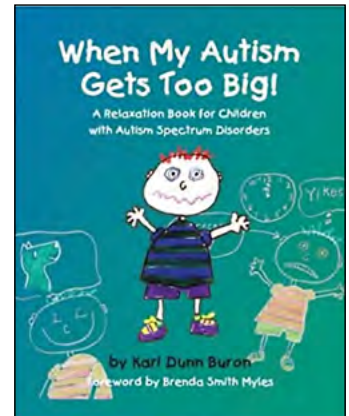
## Toolkit

### Autism specific resources:

#### When My Autism Gets Too Big

**Kari Dunn Buron (2004), AAPC Publishing, Kansas, USA.**

This book gives young children an opportunity to explore, with parents or teachers, their own feelings as they react to events, while learning some useful relaxation techniques.



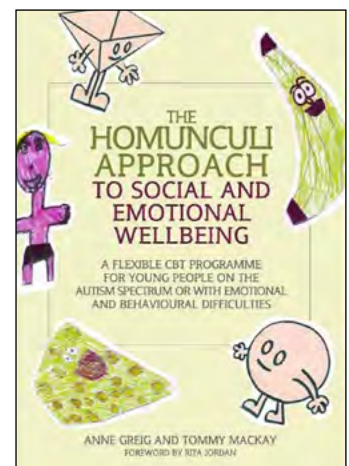
#### The Homunculi Approach to Social and Emotional Wellbeing: A Flexible CBT Programme for Young People on the Autism Spectrum or with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties

**Anne Greig and Tommy MacKay (2013)**

The Homunculi are miniature agents with problem-solving missions and special gadgets who live inside the brain and help out with distressing thoughts, feelings and behaviours. By inventing their own Homunculi characters and stories, children learn to cope with their real-life problems.

The Homunculi are miniature agents with problem-solving missions and special gadgets who live inside the brain and help out with distressing thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Through inventing their own Homunculi characters and stories, young people learn to cope with their real-life social problems

An engaging, interactive cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) programme to help young people build emotional and social resilience. The programme is designed for autistic young people on aged 8 and above to help build emotional and social resilience. Recommended for ages 8-16



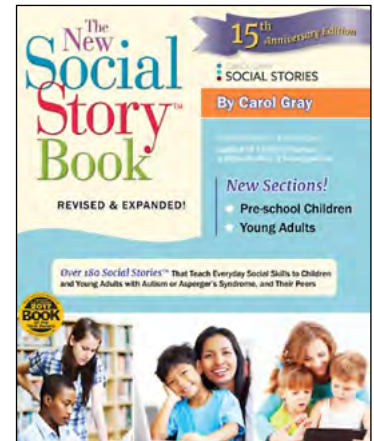
## Toolkit

### The New Social Story Book™: Over 150 Social Stories That Teach Everyday Social Skills to Children and Adults with Autism and Their Peers

**Carol Gray, 2015**

*The New Social Story Book™* provides advice and examples of how to safely and meaningfully use and apply Social Stories™ to help some people with autism understand certain social situations. They are short descriptions of a particular situation, event or activity, which include specific information about what to expect and why. This can work well to reduce uncertainty and anxiety. Social Stories™ can be used to scaffold new social learning, support social understanding, explain upcoming changes, provide positive feedback and to support non-autistic people to understand the perspective of an autistic person. This link provides some useful information on Social Stories:

[Social stories and comic strip conversations \(autism.org.uk\)](http://autism.org.uk)



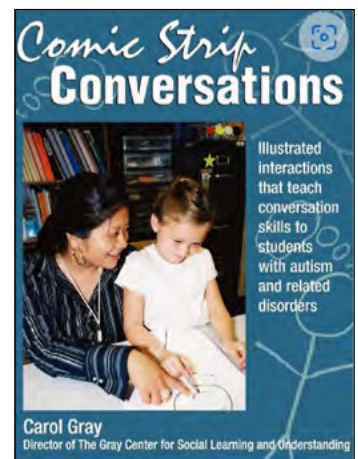
### Comic Strip Conversations: Illustrated interactions that teach conversation skills to students with autism

**Carol Gray, 1994**

*Comic Strip Conversations*, created by Carol Gray, are simple visual representations of conversation. They can show:

- the things that are actually said in a conversation
- how people might be feeling
- what people's intentions might be.

Comic strip conversations use stick figures and symbols to represent social interactions and abstract aspects of conversation, and colour to represent the emotional content of a statement or message. (From Carol Gray's *Comic strip conversations*, 1994) This can support learners to understand and navigate the social world.

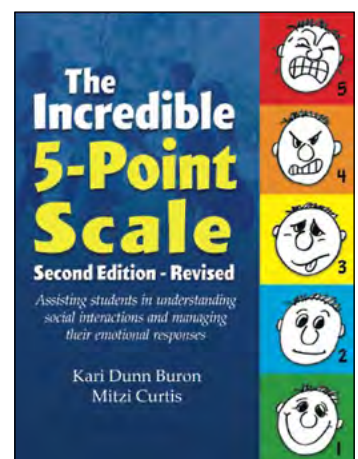


### The Incredible 5-Point Scale: Assisting Students in Understanding Social Interactions and Managing their Emotional Responses

**Kari Dunn Buron & Mitzi Curtis (2021). AAPC Publishing, Kansas, USA.**

A primary goal of the scale is to help autistic children notice and functionally respond to their own and others' social behaviour. It provides teachers and parents with a simple way to teach social rules and expectations, problem-solving skills in how to respond to others, a way to troubleshoot past and future social scenarios and support for creating plans for self-management.

Simple, clear and flexible strategies to support the development of social and interpersonal abilities and emotional awareness.



## Toolkit

### Useful online resources:

#### Help with Anxiety – A text and symbol leaflet

[Tips for Managing Anxiety | Neurodevelopment and Disability | Newcastle University \(ncl.ac.uk\)](https://www.ncl.ac.uk/neurodevelopmentanddisability/leafletsandmeasures/helpwithanxiety/)

**Professor Jacqui Rodgers, Professor of Psychology & Mental Health, Newcastle University. Adapted by Jess Rooney, Hedleys College, Percy Hedley Foundation**

A top tips leaflet of strategies to support children and young people learning to manage their anxiety.



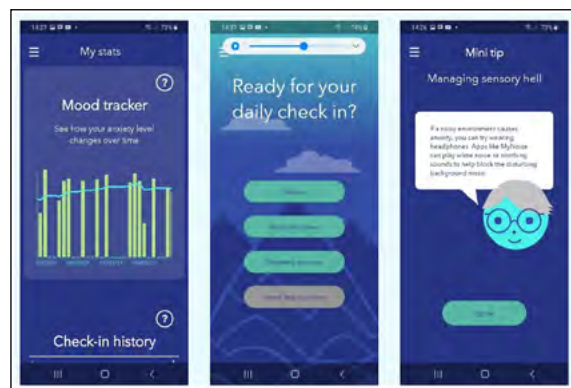
#### The Anxiety Scale for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASC-ASD)

<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/neurodisability/leafletsandmeasures/anxietyscaleforchildren-asd>

The anxiety scale for autistic CYP aged 8-16 is an assessment tool which helps to measure anxiety levels across the 4 key areas of separation, uncertainty, performance and anxious arousal.

#### Autistica’s Molehill Mountain app in the following link:

[www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/molehill-mountain-app](http://www.autistica.org.uk/get-involved/molehill-mountain-app)



#### Triple A in the Classroom: Attention, Arousal and Anxiety in the link below:

[Triple A – Just another WordPress site \(tripleadurham.co.uk\)](http://tripleadurham.co.uk)

A free online learning resource for teachers, teaching assistants, SENCOs, and school leaders for supporting autistic and neurodivergent pupils with Triple A differences: Attention, Arousal (sensory) and Anxiety.



## Toolkit

### School Exclusions: School stress and anxiety – How it can lead to school refusal and impact on family life

[School Exclusions: School Stress and Anxiety](https://autismeducationtrust.org.uk)  
([autismeducationtrust.org.uk](https://autismeducationtrust.org.uk))



### School Exclusions: Successful Reintegration of autistic pupils following school suspension

[School Exclusions: Reintegration of suspended autistic pupils](https://autismeducationtrust.org.uk)  
([autismeducationtrust.org.uk](https://autismeducationtrust.org.uk))



### Autism Educational Trust Progression Framework: Assessment tool and accompanying documents

[Progression Framework Resource | Autism Education Trust](https://autismeducationtrust.org.uk)





## Toolkit

### Useful links for reading:

[Anxiety in autistic people \(autism.org.uk\)](https://autism.org.uk)

[Anxiety and autism in the classroom](#)

<https://theautisticadvocate.com/2018/05/an-autistic-burnout/>

#### **A note on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Neurodiversity**

CBT remains one of the more effective approaches to support autistic CYP with anxiety, but only if the underlying needs relating to autism are taken into account. It is very important to understand and address:

##### **Language of emotion which encompasses the understanding and communication of**

**emotion:** our autistic CYP often have difficulties with knowing how they feel and communicating this in a timely manner with those who can offer help.

**Social understanding:** we know that social situations can often cause high levels of anxiety due to the CYP not being able to easily make sense of the situation or know how to respond. For some of our autistic CYP this underlying difference needs to be addressed explicitly as part of the CBT.

**Rigidity of thinking:** can often impose barriers to a CYP accessing intervention.

##### **Some simple adaptations can improve engagement:**

- ✓ Spend some time relationship building at the start of each session – build trust and familiarity
- ✓ Structure and predictability is important – perhaps start and end each session in the same way (Games/sensory activities etc)
- ✓ Consider the young person's strengths – go visual and practical
- ✓ Use special interests to support engagement – within content or as a motivator
- ✓ Work closely with the young person's family





# Appendix 1:

## Whole School approaches to support CYP who may become anxious about school

### Audit Tool

#### Introduction

**Audit tool for reflection on practice and provision for supporting children and young people who may become anxious about school.**

This framework can be used by practitioners as a self-reflection tool that enables them to evaluate their practice when supporting anxious, or anxious and neurodivergent, pupils in school.

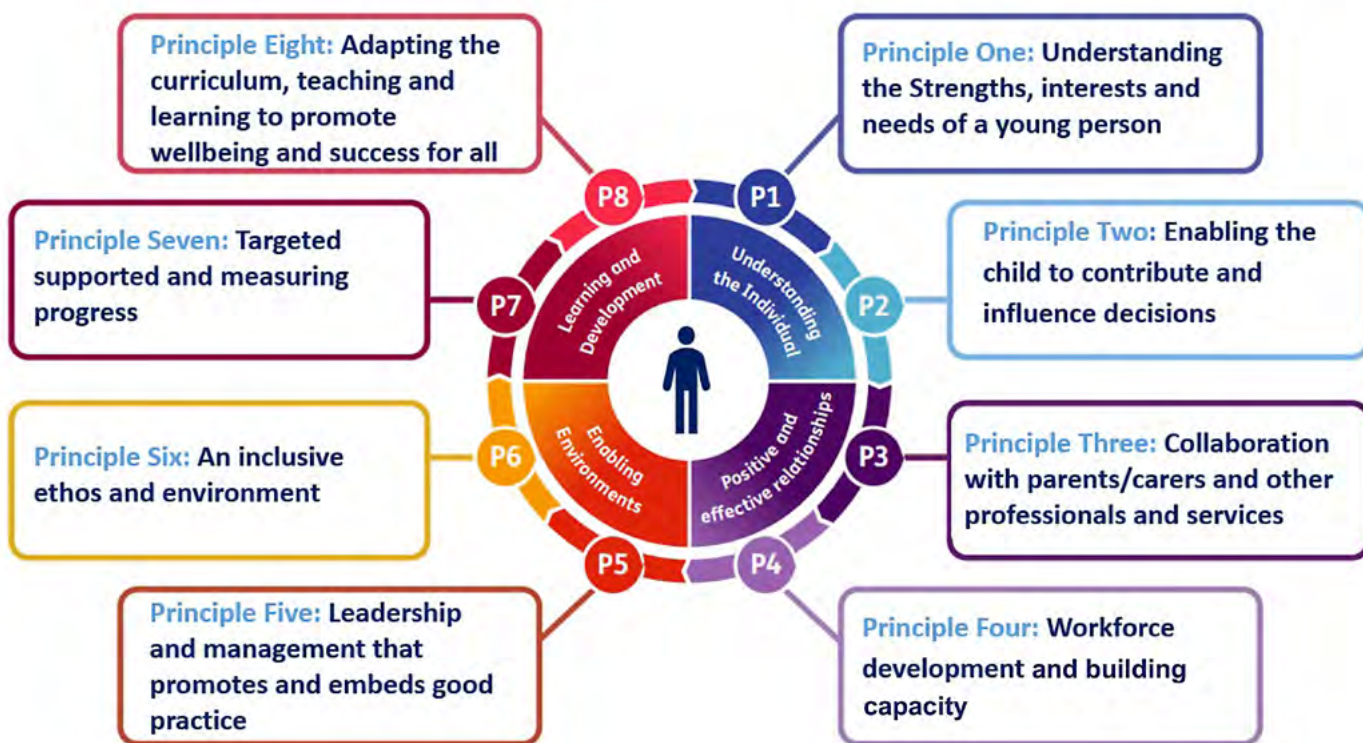
It is designed to be an ongoing self-reflection tool to enable staff to:

- Self-assess their skills and competencies
- Identify priority areas to work on.
- Decide which aspects of their practice require further development.
- Consider their professional development needs.
- Seek appropriate professional development

It is important for practitioners to understand the strengths and needs of a young person. As outlined in the **Durham County Council 'Anxious About School' Guidance document**, there is a growing body of evidence which suggests that children and young people who are neurodiverse are more likely to experience anxiety about school. Neurodivergent pupils often face significant barriers to learning within the educational environment. These can be overcome by ensuring we create supportive teaching environments that are structured, consistent, and respectful of differences. Understanding autism, and other neurodivergence such as ADHD, Developmental Coordination Disorder, enables staff to provide specific support, use suitable teaching approaches and make adjustments to tasks and the environment to enable young people to be comfortable and flourish in the school environment.

## Toolkit

It is essential that when we are considering the risk factors as to why young people could be presenting as anxious about school, that we are curious about how any underlying learning differences could be contributing. Please be mindful of this as you work through the audit.



## Toolkit

Adapted from AET Competency Framework

# Audit of whole School approaches to support CYP who may become anxious about school

School: ..... Completed by: ..... Date: .....

Priorities	Where Are We?			Required Actions	Next Steps
	Embedded	In Progress	Not Started		
<b>Principle One: Understanding the strengths, interests, and needs of a young person</b>					
1. Do staff have a good understanding of the primary needs of anxious pupils in school?					
2. Do staff understand the contributory factors that may increase a pupil's risk of experiencing anxiety?					
3. Do staff gather information from a wide variety of sources about the strengths, interests and needs of each pupil?					
<b>Principle Two: Enabling pupils to contribute to and influence decisions</b>					
4. Does the school have a system to ensure all pupils feel valued, respected and listened to?					
5. Does the school understand the importance of regularly consulting and involving pupils in decisions being made around their provision? (e.g. Talking Mats / RAG rating activities / Pupil discussions)					

## Toolkit

Priorities	Where Are We?			Required Actions	Next Steps
	Embedded	In Progress	Not Started		
<b>Principle Three: Collaboration with parents/carers and other professionals and services</b>					
6. Do staff facilitate the exchange of information between members of staff, home, and relevant professionals beyond the setting?					
7. Is the school aware of the importance of understanding the needs of parents (who themselves may have mental health needs or disabilities) and families from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds?					
<b>Principle Four: Workforce development and building capacity</b>					
8. Have staff attended training around the mental health needs of CYP?					
9. Do staff manage their own response to a child under stress in a way that helps the child to self-regulate (calm down & feel safe)?					
10. Do staff change what they do according to what is most effective for individuals?					
11. Are there opportunities for staff to share good practice to ensure that anxious pupils have smooth transitions and consistent provision between staff, subjects and settings?					

## Toolkit

Priorities	Where Are We?			Required Actions	Next Steps
	Embedded	In Progress	Not Started		
<b>Principle Five: Leadership and management that promotes and embeds good practice</b>					
12. Do staff consider the accessibility of the learning environment for anxious pupils by taking into account potential barriers / demands?					
13. Do staff implement approaches to develop mutual understanding, positive communication and support between pupils and their peers? (e.g. Teaching about neurodiversity, raising awareness around mental health)					
14. Do staff understand that a young person's responses are a form of communication? Are they curious about why young people may be responding in particular ways?					
15. Do staff assess the sensory needs of pupils to determine whether modifications to the environment / routine are needed?					
<b>Principle Six: An ethos and environment that fosters social inclusion</b>					
16. How well are positive relationships already nurtured within school? Pupil – Pupil Staff – Staff Staff – Pupil Staff – Parents / Parents – Staff School & wider community					
17. Are there easily accessible spaces to allow children to self-regulate (calm down) safely? If they are unable to request a break themselves, do staff know when to prompt a break?					
18. Do young people have an identified “key adult” when they need one? Are children and staff clear about when and how to go to their “key adult”?					

## Toolkit

Priorities	Where Are We?			Required Actions	Next Steps
	Embedded	In Progress	Not Started		
<b>Principle Seven: Targeted support and measuring progress</b>					
19. Do school involve parents, pupils and external professionals, as appropriate, in setting learning outcomes, and in reviewing and assessing progress?					
20. Do pupils have individual one-page profiles and pupil-centred plans that are tailored to their strengths and needs with clear support strategies?					
<b>Principle Eight: Adapting the curriculum, teaching and learning to promote wellbeing and success for all</b>					
21. Do staff help children talk about and reflect on their feelings? (PSHE / RSE / Wider curriculum and check ins)?					
22. Does school consider how anxiety affects an individual pupil and whether reasonable adjustments have been made to support them?					

Toolkit

**Whole school approaches to support CYP who may become anxious about school – Audit Summary**

Statement	Embedded	In Progress	Not Started
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			

# Appendix 2:

## Audit Tool Action Plan

Please select the three red statements, and two amber statements, that feel most pertinent to develop in your setting.

Statement from audit tool	Required actions	First steps	Evaluation



Toolkit

# Appendix 3:

## Sources of anxiety checklist

Name of Child: .....

Completed by (staff, parent and CYP): ..... Date: .....

Possible source	Where Are They?			Comments and Support Required	Review
	Copes Well	Sometimes Manages	Finds this Challenging		
<b>Change</b>					
1. Transitions: in and out of school; between lessons and places; between tasks					
2. Routines e.g. trips, supply staff, timetable changes, visitors, new classroom, safe space is different					
3. Unexpected event such as fire alarm, incident at home, absence of friend or key adult					
<b>Social demands and relationships with others</b>					
4. Maintaining friendships					
5. Modifying responses to different people e.g. talking to adults differently to peers					
6. Group work and collaboration					
7. Unstructured times in school such as break and lunch times					

## Toolkit

Possible source	Where Are They?			Comments and Support Required	Review
	Copes Well	Sometimes Manages	Finds this Challenging		
<b>Sensory Environment</b>					
8. Busy, large spaces e.g. corridors, hall, dining hall					
9. Noise, both in and out of class					
10. Smells of toilets, food technology, dining hall					
11. Lighting in the classrooms e.g. too bright					
12. Tactile such as uniform (too tight, itchy, uncomfortable) or being touched by others					
13. Maintaining attention in lessons					
<b>Communication</b>					
14. Understanding verbal language e.g. what others are saying. Processes language quickly enough to keep up in lessons and in conversations					
15. Expressing wants and needs clearly through functional language, including initiating a conversation to let someone know that they need help					
16. Expressing themselves in social situations e.g. in a group					
17. Communicating emotions in a timely and expected manner					

## Toolkit

Possible source	Where Are They?			Comments and Support Required	Review
	Copes Well	Sometimes Manages	Finds this Challenging		
<b>Learning</b>					
18. Processing information quickly enough to keep up during lessons					
19. Remembering previous learning and apply to new learning (generalisation)					
20. Using visual aids and other concrete tools to support learning during lessons					
21. Having a go at most tasks, even if they are not of direct interest					
22. Accepting if they get something wrong, responding well to support and acting on advice					
23. Problem solving					
<b>Independence</b>					
24. Managing individual resources every day, such as equipment for lessons					
25. Getting changed for PE					
26. Homework is done on time					
27. Unstructured times of the day					
<b>Other</b>					

Toolkit

# Appendix 4a: Information Gathering Sheet 1

The questions below are examples you may wish to explore.

## Child

### Emotional

If you have witnessed emotional distress in the CYP, what did this look like and what caused it?

---

When did some emotional distress first occur, have there been similar difficulties?

---

### Social

How included or socially isolated do they feel from peers?

---

Are they being bullied?

---

Do they have difficulties working with or socialising with their peers?

---

What are relationships with adults and peers like?

---

### Learning

Are there any special educational needs?

---

What is their response to academic tasks?

---

What support or differentiation is put in place and how do you or the young person respond?

---

Is the pupil struggling to access learning? Or feeling as though they aren't making enough progress? Is this affecting self esteem?

---

Are they struggling to manage around testing or exams?

---

## School

Can you tell me about their early experiences at school? The primary school, at the start of secondary school?

---

Are there patterns with the rate of attendance?

---

What are their positive experiences in school?

---

Which areas of school can unsettle the child?

---

Are they following instructions and routines easily?

---

Which aspects of support are used effectively?

---

How does the child cope with unstructured time and assessment?

---

Is the pupil struggling to adjust to changes to staff, surroundings or routines?

---

Please describe a typical day when s/he goes to school from the moment s/he... gets up until s/he goes to bed..... and when s/he doesn't go to school?

---

Have there been times when s/he managed to get into school? What was different about those times?

---

When, where and why is the pupil very uncomfortable in school e.g. noise, lighting, busy areas or the feel of the school uniform?

---

## Family

Any changes in family dynamic? (Separation, loss, birth of a sibling, health issues of other family members, move).

---

Have there been any changes within the family recently? (You could ask them to draw a family tree / genogram).

---

Are there any other needs within the family?

---

Does the parent / carer have a health condition?

---

What are the positive relationships in the family?

---

Has there been behaviour changes at home?

---

How have they coped with change and transition historically?

---

What does s/he do when they do not go to school? What do other family members do?

---

How does their non-attendance impact on the parent and the family? Who is better at dealing with the situation? Why?

---

What has helped in the past when things have been difficult? What strategies have been most helpful so far in managing their anxiety?

---



Toolkit

# Appendix 4b: Information Gathering Sheet 2

..... is currently experiencing difficulties attending school which we feel may be due to emotional distress. We would like to gain a picture of how they are in school. As an adult who works with ..... please complete the questionnaire below.

**Your name** ..... **Lesson/activity** .....

**Please describe** .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What are** ..... **'s strengths?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What is going well for** ..... **?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Toolkit

**What does ..... find difficult?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**How does ..... get on with their peers?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**How does ..... get on with you and other adults?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Is ..... engaged and motivated with their learning. Are they making progress?  
If not why not?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Toolkit

**Have you observed any emotional difficulties at school, what have these been, when did/do they occur?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What support to you provide for ..... . How do they respond to this?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What is your understanding of .....’s attendance problems?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What do you think would help ..... in school?**

.....

.....

.....

.....



Toolkit

# Appendix 5:

## Formulation Framework

Name of Student: ..... DOB: .....

School: ..... Year Group: .....

Key Adults: .....

### Predisposing Factors:

What made them vulnerable to anxiety in the first place?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Triggers for the most recent episode of anxiety

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Problem:** What is the current situation or 'the problem'?

.....

.....

.....

**Perpetuating Factors:** Things that keep 'the anxiety' going (these might include things they do to control the problem)

.....

.....

.....



Toolkit



**Protective Factors:** Positive things that they've got going for them

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----



**Puzzling factors:** What needs exploring further?

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----



**Plan:** What happens next?

-----

-----

-----

-----

-----

# Appendix 6:

## Assessment of Needs checklist

Area of Need to assess	Step towards	Complete (Y/N)
<b>School needs</b>	Completed the whole school audit tool ( <i>Appendix 1</i> )	
<b>Child or young person's needs</b>	Discussed or engaged with family in some way, most comfortable to them ( <i>Appendices 4a &amp; 4b</i> )	
	Observed child or young person in at least 2 contexts e.g. lesson and break time (not while teaching)	
	Discussed or engaged with child or young person in some way, most comfortable to them	
	Completed sources of anxiety checklist ( <i>Appendix 3</i> )	
	Completed a formulation of needs ( <i>Appendix 5</i> )	
	Engaged with other professionals / support services, <b><i>if necessary</i></b>	

Toolkit

# Appendix 7:

## Planning form

Name: ..... Class: .....

DOB: ..... Key Person: .....

**Strengths:**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What is currently going well or working? And how can we do more of this?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Main sources of anxiety identified from the checklist: (*Appendix 3*)?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

## Toolkit

**What reasonable adjustments can we make in light of the identified sources of anxiety?**

---

---

---

---

---

**What timetable changes can we make in light of the identified sources of anxiety (if necessary)?**

---

---

---

---

---

**What would we like to see the CYP doing in two week's time? (This needs to be a very small step)**

---

---

---

---

---

**These small steps can then be converted into outcomes for a support plan or short note.** (e.g. CYP will meet Mrs X at the side entrance at 8:45am. Or, During 1:1 sessions the CYP will be able to describe how the anxiety feels in their body)

**What other support might be helpful at this stage? And who do we need to contact about this?**

(e.g. One Point, Resilience Nurses, Specialist SEND teams (EWEL), Attendance Team – for staff support, CAMHS)

---

---

---

---

---

# Appendix 8:

## Planning next steps checklist

Planning step	Complete (Y/N)
Completed the action plan from the whole school audit tool ( <i>Appendix 2</i> ) and identified future CPD needs as part of this process.	
Completed the planning sheet with child or young person and their family. ( <i>Appendix 7</i> ) (not necessarily all together in one meeting – consider the best way to work with the CYP and include their views in the plan)	
Updated or written a short note or support plan in collaboration with child or young person, family and other professionals involved.	
Communicated all changes to staff, professionals, family and child or young person.	

Toolkit

# Appendix 9:

## Review form

Name: ..... Class: .....

DOB: ..... Key Person: .....

**This review form should be completed alongside a review of the Support Plan. New outcomes or amendments to existing outcomes should be recorded on the Support Plan directly.**

**What are we pleased with so far?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What are we still concerned about?**

.....

.....

.....

.....

**What have we learnt?**

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## Toolkit

**What do we need to do next?**

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**What other support might be helpful at this stage? And who do we need to contact about this?** (e.g. One Point, Resilience Nurses, Specialist SEND teams (EWEL), Attendance Team – for staff support, CAMHS)

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# Appendix 10:

## The four steps to emotion coaching

### 1 Notice the child's feelings and empathise with them

It is important to be aware of the different emotions a child may feel. In this stage it is valuable to observe, listen, and learn how the child expresses different emotions and to watch for changes in facial expressions, body language, posture, gestures, speed of words and tone of voice. Look beneath the behaviour you see and wonder what emotion was informing this.

Recognise that the child's behaviour tells you that they are struggling with how they are feeling right now and need your support. It is important not to ignore or avoid the emotions the child is feeling. See this as an opportunity for you to connect with the child. By accepting their emotion and not blaming them for it you can help them to understand and learn to manage that feeling. It will help you to deescalate a situation or prevent it from getting worse.

Be curious rather than furious. When you listen to what the child has to say or notice their emotions, you are letting the child know that their emotions are important, that you don't blame them for feeling emotions and that you take their concerns seriously. This will help the child to feel seen and safe, it will help to soothe and start to calm down.

### 2 Label and validate the feeling that the child is experiencing in that moment

Sometimes a child can't tell you what they are feeling, so you can help them to do this. When there is a fight during play, *"it must have made you mad when he said that"*. By putting the child's feelings into words, you are comforting them but also showing you care and understand. It puts you in a better position to help them find a solution to the problem they were experiencing. Name it to tame it.

### 3 Set limits (if needed)

Emotion coaching is not about ignoring the fact that some behaviours are not acceptable. After steps 1 and 2 you need to make clear which behaviours are and are not acceptable.

Assuming that the child is safe and no one else is at risk of harm or danger, limit setting is an opportunity to teach the child the behaviour that is expected of them. Rather than punishing what you don't want the child to be doing, think about what it is that you wish the child to be doing instead. What are the important boundaries and behaviour your child needs to understand, accept, and practice? Focus on that. Perhaps a reminder is all that is needed from you; *"we agreed that you need to tidy up before break time"*. Kind reminders acknowledge that none of us learn things straight away and we need practice. Managing your emotions is the same as learning to read and write; it takes time, teaching and lots of practice.





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## Toolkit

### 4 Problem solving

When the child is calm, help them to consider what they could do when they feel those strong emotions next time. Explain why their behaviour was inappropriate or hurtful. Find solutions for what they did, not for how they feel. Give the child time to suggest solutions and when possible follow their lead in picking a solution.

Reinforce the idea that the child has the capacity within themselves to develop skills to cope with their own emotional worlds. You might: 1) Talk about feelings that gave rise to the problem; *“How were you feeling when that happened?”* 2) Identify more productive ways of expressing those feelings; *“Let’s think of what you could have done instead.”* 3) Help them find and agree a solution; *“You could ..or.... which one sounds good to you?”* *“How can you practice to.....”* *“What will help you to remember to do this?”*



# Contacts

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